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Media Notes

WJR Picks the Aides

By Eleanor Randolph
Washington Post Staff Writer

Arriving with a thud on Capitol Hill this week were the June issues of the Washington Journalism Review that, among other things, ranked congressional press secretaries.

As it turned out, when Capitol Hill reporters judged the more than 500 press secretaries, they decided that the best was no longer among them. Thirty-five-year-old Tom C. Griscom, who encountered the press for former Senate majority leader Howard H. Baker Jr., was ranked in the informal survey of Capitol Hill reporters as accessible, candid, honest.

Griscom, now executive director of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, sighed and said, "It's not true, not a word of it."

Walter Riker, Griscom's replacement as press secretary to the majority leader, did not fare so well. Baltimore Sun White House correspondent Robert Timberg, who wrote the WJR article, quoted Hill reporters as saying, anonymously, "He's not well informed" and "He's really a clerk."

"Boy, it's a good thing my kids can't read yet," said Riker on hearing about the comments.

Riker added in defense of his team that the new majority leader, Robert J. Dole, does his job differently from his predecessors and has "a record of access that is probably unmatched in recent Senate history."

Across the Capitol, Michael Johnson, who works for Minority Leader Robert H. Michel (R-Ill.), is ranked as "perhaps the best press secretary on the Hill right now."

His counterpart on the Democratic side, Christopher J. Matthews, is deemed "most controversial," as well as "brash, glib, outspoken and fiercely partisan."

Said one reporter of Matthews: "you always know you'll get an outrageous quote."

When Matthews was called for response to this article, here was his first quote: "We work for them; we don't work for the press. When Bill Moyers left the White House, he was

God and Lyndon Johnson was a zero, I wouldn't say that was a good job."

Later Matthews called back for an addendum: "Doing press for Tip O'Neill is like doing makeup for Catherine Deneuve. The best work is done before you get there."

At The Washington Times, editor in chief Arnaud de Borchgrave has said he was "swamped" with phone calls last week after he set up a fund to aid the Nicaraguan contras.

Lest it be suggested that such a role is unusual or unseemly for a newspaper, de Borchgrave posted a note on the Times bulletin board that included the following:

"Some of our leftwing detractors will doubtless ask whether it is the role of a newspaper to kill people? That question has no relevance to what is being done here. Let's put the question another way. Should the French have aided George Washington so the United States could come into existence? Should we have aided the French resistance against the Nazis? Should we have aided the Greek patriots who successfully resisted a Communist totalitarian regime . . . ?"

"Remember the Truman doctrine?" Missing from this historical message was a similar rallying cry made famous by William Randolph Hearst in 1898: "Remember the Maine."

Lawyers in New York have begun taking depositions for the bizarre case of former New York Times reporter Kennett Love versus Wall Street Journal reporter Jonathan Kwitny.

At issue is whether Love helped the CIA with a coup in Iran in 1953 while working for The Times and whether Kwitny illegally used Love's private papers to bolster charges against Love in his book "Endless Enemies."

Love, who has denied any connections to the CIA, has filed suit charging copyright infringement and seeking \$5 million in libel damages.

"I am an historian and a journalist and my stock in trade are words and truth," said Love. "If I am a CIA agent and lying to my readers, who is going

to listen to what I have to say? That is libel per se."

The part of Kwitny's book at issue in this case is a long passage quoting verbatim from a document Love wrote in 1960 while on a press fellowship at Princeton.

In the document, Love outlines how the CIA ousted Mohammed Mossadegh, the democratically elected Iranian premier, in 1953. Kwitny said this document came from the Allen Dulles collection of papers at Princeton and had no copyright mark.

Kwitny contends that this document shows that Love was an "active participant" in the 1953 coup, and that this version was different from the version Love wrote in The Times.

"It is an outrage for a reporter to have done such a thing," said Kwitny.

"The paper said [Love] witnessed the Americans carrying off this coup," Kwitny said. "He directed the tanks to Mossadegh's house. He was an active participant in this operation."

"If he is still maintaining that, then he is an ass," Love said.

Love said that as a Times reporter covering the 1953 coup he did not know what the initials CIA stood for.

"I told tanks where the carnage and bloodshed was and that they should go down there where they could do some good," Love said. "I regret very much telling those tanks about that . . . I did give a little nudge there, but it had nothing to do with the CIA."

Love, who worked for The Times from 1948 to 1962, told The East Hampton (N.Y.) Star that while at The Times, he was scrupulous in uncovering the corruption and brutality of the shah and was banned from Iran the year after the coup because of such coverage.

Love also says the paper Kwitny quotes from so extensively was written hastily for a course and included "a good many things that I had learned since I left Iran."

Love, who lives in East Hampton, points out that perhaps the most crucial passage in Kwitny's book says, in part: "And there we have it folks, the Iranian correspondent for The New York Times directing the successful tank attack on the home of the Iranian prime minister, overthrowing the government, fixing one-man rule in Iran, and setting off a chain of events that would include the loss of Iranian oil to U.S. markets and the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union."

"I read that whenever I feel insignificant," Love said, laughing.